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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7973rd meeting
Thursday, 15 June 2017, 4 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 May from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/469)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Expression of sympathy for the victims of terrorism in Kabul

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my heartfelt condolences about the loss of life in an attack today in Kabul. I am sure that I speak on behalf of all members of the Security Council in expressing our condemnation of these acts, our condolences to the families of the victims, our wishes for a rapid recovery for the wounded and our solidarity with the people and Government of Afghanistan.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 May from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/469)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/469, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 May 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Ms. Nakamitsu.

Ms. Nakamitsu: I thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Security Council once again for the opportunity to brief you on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. As before, I will also provide them with an update on the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). Mr. Mulet, Head of the JIM Leadership Panel, will join me at next month's briefing.

I will first turn to the progress related to resolution 2118 (2013) and the elimination of Syria's declared chemical weapons programme. Since my last briefing (see S/PV.7946), I was able to meet in person with the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to discuss matters related to this file and to continue the good and constructive engagement that has been established. In addition, the Director General, Mr. Mulet and I spoke by phone yesterday, in anticipation of the briefing.

I have also spoken with the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and have now met with most members of the Council. All these discussions have allowed me to deepen my understanding of this complex and challenging portfolio.

Although there is little new to report since my last briefing on 23 May, there have been small changes and, I am pleased to note, some progress. The Secretary-General's last letter noted the unchanged situation with regard to remaining declared chemical weapons production facilities. As members recall, one hangar remained to be destroyed and the OPCW Technical Secretariat had yet to verify the condition of two aboveground stationary facilities. The lack of progress in this regard was due to the prevailing security situation, which precluded safe access to these sites. On 6 June, the remaining aircraft hangar was destroyed. The destruction was observed by an OPCW team. As of yet, however, there is no change to the lack of safe access to the site of the two above-ground stationary facilities.

The long-standing issues related to Syria's declaration and subsequent amendments also remain. Plans for a fourth round of high-level consultations are continuing, but as yet no new dates have been set. The last such consultations took place a year ago, in June 2016. The Secretary-General continues to urge cooperation between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW to resolve these issues in order for the OPCW to be in a position to verify that activities are in accordance with the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and consistent with the information provided in declarations. This in turn will allow the international community to have full confidence in the same.

In November 2016, the OPCW Executive Council decided that the OPCW would conduct inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre. The decision also called upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to provide full and unfettered access to the

Centre. The first inspections were duly carried out from 26 February to 5 March. Four samples were taken at the Centre — two from each facility. The results of the sample analysis indicated that there were no unscheduled chemicals present in the samples. The OPCW is planning a second inspection to take place in the second half of this year.

I am informed by the OPCW that the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic continues investigations into the allegation of the use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April. Last month, a status update on this investigation was transmitted by the OPCW Director General to the Secretary-General and subsequently circulated to the Security Council. I am further informed that the OPCW Fact-finding Mission team recently visited Damascus and may do so again. In addition, planning is still under way for the deployment of a team to the site of the incident. As always, any such deployment will depend upon the most stringent security assurances for the OPCW team. The OPCW was not able to say with certainty when the Fact-finding Mission team will be able to submit its conclusions on this incident, only that it will do so when it considers that it has sufficient information and evidence.

With the appointment of Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins, the Leadership Panel of the JIM is now complete. Ms. Cheng-Hopkins had a long and distinguished career at the United Nations, including most recently as the head of the Peacebuilding Support Office. She joins Mr. Mulet and Mr. Stefan Mogl and will be advising the Panel on political matters.

As stated in the Secretary-General's most recent letter to the Security Council (S/2017/469) following its assessment of the report of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission, the JIM has started an in-depth investigation into the 16 September 2016 incident in Umm Hawsh. The Council will recall that the OPCW report concluded that blood sample analyses of two female casualties reported to have been involved in the alleged attack indicated exposure to sulphur mustard, as did a munition that was also reported to be connected to the incident.

The JIM is also preliminarily assessing the status update report of the Fact-finding Mission, and other available material, on the allegations of the use of chemical weapons at Khan Shaykhun, to which I referred earlier. The Leadership Panel expects to make a decision on conducting an in-depth investigation into this incident upon receipt of the Mission's final report.

As I noted at the outset, the smooth working relationship between the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the JIM has continued. The Office for Disarmament Affairs continues to work to support and facilitate the work of the JIM, while fully respecting its independence.

Both Mr. Mulet and I continue to urge the members of the Security Council to avoid politicizing this issue. In addition, as the Secretary-General states in his most recent letter to the Security Council, the continuing use of chemical weapons in Syria is not only horrific in its own right, but also profoundly damaging to the international community's confidence in its non-proliferation architecture. This is to the detriment of all of us. We have, collectively, worked to create regimes for disarmament and non-proliferation in order that our security will be enhanced. If we, collectively, permit the erosion of those regimes, so too will our security be eroded.

Nearly 100 years ago, the 1925 Geneva Protocol stated that

> "the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids, materials or devices, has been justly condemned by the general opinion of the civilized world".

Nearly 100 years later, we must continue not only to speak but to act in accordance with that view. We cannot go backwards. The Chemical Weapons Convention calls upon us "to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons". Such use remains wholly indefensible and is a threat to international peace and security. Those responsible for their use must be held accountable. Many things have changed in the years since 1925; this view of chemical weapons should not be one of them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Council members who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too thank Ms. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The use of chemical weapons, wherever it may take place, is a serious threat to international peace and security, as well as a grave violation of international

law. Uruguay therefore condemns in the most emphatic terms any use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian conflict. These actions constitute war crimes, and those responsible for these crimes must be brought to justice.

We reiterate that until the entire Syrian chemical arsenal, declared or not, has been destroyed or safeguarded, we will not be able to close definitively the dossier on Syria's chemical weapons in the Security Council. In that vein, we encourage the Syrian authorities to cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to clarify all omissions and discrepancies in the initial declaration. We also note the latest monthly report of the Director General of the OPCW, stating that it has received the documents requested from Syria to clarify and resolve all pending cases related to the initial Syrian declaration, and that high-level consultations on the matter will resume shortly.

Uruguay calls for a continued search for a consensus that will make it possible to overcome differences among members of the Council and to prevent new incidents of chemical-weapons use in Syria, as well as for the combat against the impunity of those responsible for these atrocities. In the months to come, the OPCW-United Nations Joint Implementation Mechanism (JIM) will have to determine those responsible so that the Security Council can finally take action in this regard, action which has been delayed far too often.

Uruguay reiterates its full support for the serious and impartial work of the JIM, and we trust in the leadership and demonstrated experience of Mr. Edmond Mulet, Head of the independent panel of the Mechanism, so that in the coming months the authorship of these incidents and others investigated during the second year of the mandate given by the Council can be established.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call on all members of the Council to overcome our internal differences so that we can find a political solution that will put an end to the violence, make it possible to consolidate a ceasefire, ensure the protection of civilians and give new hope to the hundreds of thousands of victims that the authors of the serious crimes committed in Syria will be brought to justice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.